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Week of March 9, 1987

BLACK WOMAN SWORN IN AS 10TH DIRECTOR OF WOMEN'S BUREAU

WASHINGTON -- Shirley M. Dennis, a Pennsylvania state official and strong advocate of women's issues, was formally sworn in as the tenth director of the 66-year-old Women's Bureau of the U.S. Department of Labor.

Dennis, who served as secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Community Affairs, becomes the chief federal advocate for American working women. Her nomination was announced by President Reagan in July 1986, and she was confirmed by the Senate on October 18, 1986.

Over 500 invited guests, dignitaries and officials from state, local and the federal government as well as major women's organizations looked on as Secretary of Labor William E. Brock administered the oath of office to Dennis.

In her remarks, Dennis pledged "to try to stay on my course, to run it with dignity, to give it all I've got, to win a few for the Gipper and to hopefully make the kind of contributions that Secretary Brock and his team expect of me as I now officially join them, as we all seek to serve all of you."

In welcoming Dennis to the Labor Department, Brock said she brings the type of leadership and skills that are not only important to the Women's Bureau but to the federal government as well.

Dennis, who was designated by Redbook Magazine as one of the 12 outstanding women in Pennsylvania in 1977, served as secretary of that state's Department of Community Affairs under Governor Richard Thornburgh from 1980 until the present.

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Week of March 9, 1987

BLACK HISTORY TRIVIAL PURSUIT COMPETITION
HELD AT U.S. LABOR DEPARTMENT

WASHINGTON -- "A. Philip Randolph was the president of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and a leader in the civil rights movement. Do you know what the 'A.' in Randolph's name is for?"

Questions similar to this and others were asked recently at a Black History Trivial Pursuit competition at the U.S. Department of Labor here.

The competition, sponsored by the department's Office of the Assistant Secretary for Administration and Management, was one of many popular Black History Month activities held in the department last month.

Eight teams, consisting of five members, competed in three rounds of of competition.

The teams were asked to answer questions on facts about blacks in the categories of business and technology, literature and art, sports, entertainment, potpourri and history.

Juanita Harrell, coordinator of the activity said she gathered the trivia questions from various sources, including current events, black history reference materials and the games Trivial Pursuit and Black Facts.

While some of the participants admitted that they studied for the competition, others said they answered the questions based on their knowledge of the subject matter.

Incidentally, the "A" in Randolph's name is for Asa.

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Week of March 9, 1987

THE CONSUMER PRICE INDEX--JANUARY 1987

WASHINGTON -- The Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U) rose 0.6 percent before seasonal adjustment in January to a level of 333.1 (1967=100), the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the U.S. Department of Labor reported. For the 12-month period ended in January, the CPI-U has increased 1.4 percent.

The Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (CPI-W) rose 0.6 percent in January, prior to seasonal adjustment. The January 1987 CPI-W level of 327.7 (1967=100) was 1.0 percent higher than the index in January 1986.

CPI for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U)

On a seasonally adjusted basis, the CPI-U rose 0.7 percent in January. This compares with increases of 0.2 percent in December and 1.1 percent for all 12 months of 1986. Led by sharply higher gasoline prices, the index for energy rose 3.0 percent in January and accounted for about one-third of the overall CPI advance. During 1986, energy prices had declined 19.7 percent. Excluding energy, the CPI rose 0.5 percent in January, compared with an average monthly increase of 0.3 percent in 1986.

The index for transportation, which was unchanged in December, rose 1.5 percent in January. A 6.6 percent increase in the motor fuel component accounted for over two-thirds of the transportation increase. Despite the sharp January advance, gasoline prices were 26.1 percent lower than a year ago and 35.1 percent below their peak level of March 1981. In January, prices for new vehicles rose 0.3 percent and automobile finance charges increased 0.6 percent. The index for used cars turned up in January, increasing 0.3 percent, after seasonal adjustment. Automobile insurance costs continued to rise substantially--up 0.9 percent in January and 10.8 percent during the past 12 months. The index for public transportation increased 0.3 percent in January.

The housing index increased 0.5 percent in January, following a 0.2 percent rise in December. All three major housing groups--shelter, fuel and other utilities, and household furnishings and operations--contributed to the acceleration. The index for fuel and other utilities, which had declined in December, turned upward in January, largely due to a sharp increase in fuel oil prices. The 9.8 percent increase in fuel oil prices was the largest monthly advance since a 11.9 percent rise in January 1974. Despite the January increase, fuel oil prices were 26.8 percent below their level a year ago and 36.3 percent lower than their peak level in April 1981. Among other fuels, charges for natural gas rose 0.4 percent, while the index for electricity was unchanged, following seasonal adjustment. The index for other utilities and public services also was unchanged in January. A 8.7 percent decline in interstate toll calls was offset by substantial price increases for local telephone services, cable television, refuse collection, and water and sewerage maintenance. The index for shelter rose 0.5 percent in January, following increases of 0.2 percent in each of the preceding 2 months. Renters' shelter costs rose 0.7 percent, with charges for residential rent and lodging while out of town, up 0.4 and 1.4 percent, respectively. Homeowners' shelter costs rose 0.4 percent and maintenance and repair costs, 0.6 percent. The index for household furnishings and operation rose 0.6 percent, following a 0.4 percent increase in December, largely as a result of sharp increases in prices for televisions and other video and sound equipment.

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The food and beverage component increased 0.5 percent seasonally adjusted in January, compared with 0.2 percent in December. Grocery store food prices rose 0.4 percent. Relatively large increases were recorded in the indexes for fruits and vegetables, carbonated beverages, fats and oils, sugar, and frozen prepared foods. The index for meats, poultry, fish, and eggs, however, declined 0.2 percent. Price declines for pork, poultry, and eggs more than offset a large increase in prices for fish and seafood. The index for beef and veal was unchanged, after seasonal adjustment. Prices for restaurant meals rose 0.4 and the index for alcoholic beverages was up 0.9 percent.

The index for other goods and services rose 1.1 percent in January. A 2.0 percent increase in prices for tobacco products accounted for about 40 percent of the advance. Substantial price increases also were recorded for school books and supplies, tuition and other school fees, and legal services fees.

The medical care component rose 0.4 percent in January to a level 7.5 percent above its level a year prior. In January, the index for medical care commodities--prescription drugs, non-prescription drugs, and medical supplies--rose 0.8 percent. The index for medical care services increased 0.4 percent, with the costs of professional services and hospital and related services up 0.4 and 0.3 percent, respectively.

The index for apparel and upkeep increased 0.4 percent in January, following seasonal adjustment. Somewhat smaller than usual seasonal price reductions in January were responsible for the 0.4 percent increase in the clothing index. Charges for apparel services rose 0.9 percent.

The entertainment index continued to register very moderate increases, advancing 0.2 percent in January.

CPI for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (CPI-W)

On a seasonally adjusted basis, the CPI for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers rose 0.7 percent in January.

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REAL EARNINGS IN JANUARY 1987

WASHINGTON -- Real average weekly earnings decreased 0.3 percent from December to January after seasonal adjustment, according to preliminary data released by the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the U.S. Department of Labor. This decrease stemmed from a 0.7 percent increase in the Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (CPI-W), which was partially offset by a 0.1 percent increase in average hourly earnings and a 0.3 percent increase in average weekly hours.

Data on average weekly earnings are collected from the payroll reports of private nonfarm establishments. Earnings of both full-time and part-time workers holding production or nonsupervisory jobs are included. Real average weekly earnings are calculated by adjusting earnings in current dollars for changes in the CPI-W.

Average weekly earnings increased by 1.0 percent between January of 1986 and 1987 as a result of a 1.8 percent increase in average hourly earnings, which was partially offset by a 0.9 percent decrease in average weekly hours. After adjustment for a 1.0 percent increase in the CPI-W over the same period, real average weekly earnings decreased 0.1 percent. Before adjustment for seasonal change and deflation by the CPI-W, average weekly earnings were $305.47 in January 1987, compared with $302.58 a year earlier.

THE HOURLY EARNINGS INDEX

The Hourly Earnings Index (HEI) in dollars of constant purchasing power decreased 0.6 percent between December and January. Compared with a year earlier, the HEI increased by 1.0 percent.
The HEI excludes the effects of two types of changes unrelated to underlying wage rate movements--fluctuations in overtime in manufacturing and interindustry employment shifts.

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FILLERS FROM THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

The rate of fatal injuries in the nation's coal mining industry rose slightly in 1986, compared to the 1985 rate, while the fatal injury rate in the metal and nonmetal (non-coal) mining industry in 1986 was the same as the year before, according to the U.S. Department of Labor.

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The rate of coal mine deaths according to production hours worked in 1986 was about average for annual coal fatality rates during the 1980s, and the 1986 fatality rate for mining other than coal mining was one of the lowest rates in recent years, according to the U.S. Department of Labor's Mine Safety and Health Administration.

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In coal mining last year, the rate of fatal injuries per 200,000 employee work hours was .05, up from .04 for all of 1985. Eighty-seven coal miners died in work-related accidents during 1986, compared to 67 fatalities in 1985, according to the U.S. Department of Labor's Mine Safety and Health Administration.

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